

TOWN OF

A M H E R S T

MASSACHUSETTS



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TOWN OF AMHERST
2010 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT FUNDING
SOCIAL SERVICE APPLICATION

PLEASE SUBMIT FIVE COPIES OF YOUR PROPOSAL

BY:

OCTOBER 29, 2010 AT 4:30 P.M.

TO:

Amherst Planning Department
Amherst Town Hall, 2nd floor
4 Boltwood Avenue
AMHERST, MA 01002

TOWN OF AMHERST HUMAN SERVICE FUNDING APPLICATION

AGENCY NAME: Amherst Survival Center

AGENCY ADDRESS: PO Box 9629, 1200 North Pleasant Street, North Amherst MA 01059

AGENCY PHONE NO: (413) 549-3968 x207 CONTACT PERSON: Cheryl Zoll

2011 CDBG REQUEST: \$20,482

Cover Sheet – Social Service Activity

1. Project Name: **Food Pantry Project**
2. Budget Request: **\$20,482**
3. Activity Identification—please check one
 - ☐ Homelessness and sheltering
 - ☐ Education: outreach and advocacy
 - ☐ Mental health services
 - ☒ Emergency & preventive services: rental, food, fuel, shelter and transitional assistance
 - ☐ Other
4. Number of low/moderate income individuals/families served: **1,691**
5. Describe how you will ensure that participants meet low/moderate income requirements:
We use income self-declaration forms with USDA guidelines
6. Demonstrate consistency with the Town's Community Development Strategy and the priorities as established by the Community Development Committee:

This project falls under the following portion of the Community Development Strategy:

"Provide Social Services including ... emergency services, including emergency rental assistance, emergency fuel assistance, emergency shelter, emergency food, information and referral services and other critical information for low-and moderate at-risk families ... The Town is most concerned with sustaining and expanding current Town funded programs as well as those agencies currently receiving Town funds for some activities."

Please submit responses to the following questions:

A. Please describe in full the project for which you are requesting funding

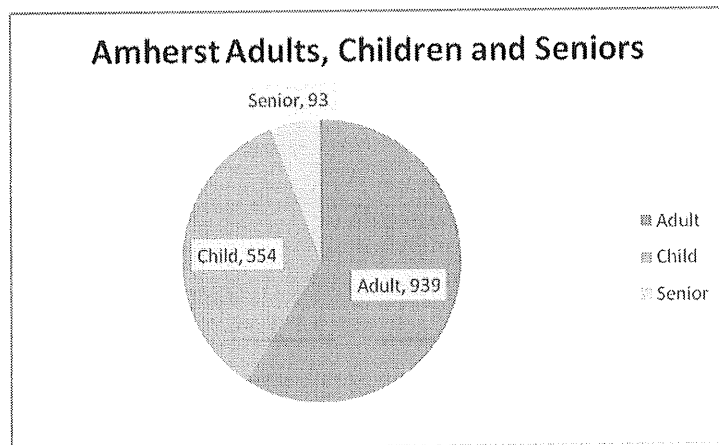
The Amherst Survival Center is requesting \$20,482 to support a portion of our *Food Pantry Project*.

The *Food Pantry Project* is designed to promote adequate nutrition for low-income residents of Amherst and the surrounding areas, including many who are homeless. "Low-income" in this case, is defined by the USDA standard of at or below 185% of the US poverty level (e.g., \$33,874 for a family of three).

Participants in the *Food Pantry Project* are eligible to receive a box of groceries each month. This 50-pound box, which contains canned food, pasta, peanut butter, soup, cereal, meat, juice and milk, supplies nine meals for each family member. Food is either purchased at the Food Bank of Western MA or collected from donors individually or from food drives organized through local churches, schools and community groups.

The benefits of the *Food Pantry Project* go beyond food. While participants shop for their monthly box, the pantry's staff and its 20 volunteers offer cooking tips and nutritional information about available foods. They also use the opportunity to make referrals to other services that consumers identify as a need. These include such things as access to food stamps, health insurance, fuel assistance, and affordable housing, some of which are provided by other Center programs.

In the last twelve months, the *Food Pantry Project* provided nutritious food for 2,568 people (unduplicated), of whom 1,691 were low-income residents of Amherst (an increase of approximately 17% over the previous year). Among Amherst residents, 52 consumers identify themselves as homeless, and at least 232 households (out of a total of 699 unduplicated households in Amherst) contain at least one disabled member. Consumers range in age from newborn to 92 years old. The following graph shows the age breakdown of participants.



The goal of the *Food Pantry Project* is to make sure that adequate nutrition is accessible to all. For the 544 Amherst children we serve, we make sure to have an abundance of child-friendly nutritious food. For those at the other end of the age spectrum, the *Food Pantry Project* delivers food boxes monthly to the Amherst Senior Center, Clark House, Anne Whalen and Chestnut Court. The program also makes additional effort to provide food for people suffering from nutrition-related conditions such as diabetes, lactose intolerance, gluten allergies, high cholesterol and high blood pressure.

B. What is the community's need for the proposed project/program?

Basic needs services like ours are critical in Amherst and the surrounding area. Project Bread's 2007 annual *Status Report on Hunger in Massachusetts* names Amherst as one of thirty-five municipalities in the state with the highest concentration of hunger and poverty, along with cities such as Greenfield, Holyoke, and Springfield. The rate of free and reduced lunch usage in schools, whose cut-off is approximately double the US poverty level, provides another measure of poverty in the region. In Amherst, 29% of our elementary students, nearly one-in-three, utilize the free and reduced lunch program.¹ This is a large number of struggling families who must make dire choices between food and heat, health care and childcare every day.

Alarming as this statistic is, it does not capture the true level of poverty in the area. The Economic Policy Institute has demonstrated that at the US poverty level (\$18,310 for a family of three), the full range of basic needs, including food, clothing, shelter, transportation, health care and child care, remains unaffordable.² A more realistic "basic needs" budget is approximately 250% of the poverty level in an area like ours, or \$46,000 for a family of three, requiring an hourly salary of over \$20/hour.³ This is out of reach for many.

Reduced buying power forces families to cut corners where nutrition is concerned, with adverse physical and mental health consequences as a result. This is especially true of the vulnerable population served by the Survival Center, which includes children, the elderly, people suffering from mental illness and the homeless. Many studies have shown that rates of obesity and type 2 diabetes in the United States, beginning in childhood, follow a socioeconomic gradient, with the burden of disease falling disproportionately on the poor. A report in the *New York Times* in March 2008 documented moreover "widening socioeconomic inequalities in life expectancy" at birth

¹ Amherst Regional Public School's 2007-2008 *State of the District Report*

² Bernstein, Brocht and Spade-Aguilar (2000), *How Much is Enough? Basic Family Budgets for Working Families*

³ National Center for Children and Poverty, Columbia University

and at every age level. Significantly lower life expectancies for people in poverty are attributed in part to unhealthy diets that are a consequence of the unavailability of fresh produce.

Low-income seniors are also particularly vulnerable to malnutrition. *America's Second Harvest*, the nation's largest charitable hunger relief organization, reported that in 2006 "28.7 percent of client households with seniors indicated that they have had to choose between food and medical care and 31 percent had to choose between food and paying for heat/utilities." The consequences of food insecurity among the elderly are high; a 2001 Tennessee study on women's health and aging, for example, found that poor nutrition among the elderly contributes significantly to depression and to an overall lower quality of life.

The impact of inferior nutrition on the mentally ill is even more pronounced. A recent study reports that although, in the general population, death rates from cardiovascular disease have declined sharply, "patients with severe mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and depression that together affect 5% to 10% of the US population, lose 25 or more years of life expectancy, with the majority of the excess premature deaths due to cardiovascular disease."⁴ In addition, the *New York Times* reports, "among the mentally ill, roughly one in every five appear to develop diabetes — about double the rate of the general population."⁵

This problem is even more pronounced among the homeless. Studies have shown that more than 1/3 of the people who are homeless are undernourished, a rate significantly higher than that of the general population.^{6,7} This is attributable to a number of factors, including lack of income to buy healthful food and complications of substance and alcohol abuse. Nutritional deficits result in higher levels of anemia, gastrointestinal disorders and hypertension.

C. Community Involvement

We are requesting funding for the *Food Pantry Project* because food, the most basic of human needs, is at the heart of our mission. In this tight economy, people often end up relying on less expensive, less nutritious, high-calorie foods to stave off hunger. As Section B demonstrated, the negative health consequences of a poor diet include a variety of serious potential health problems that have implications for a person's ability to succeed in school, work and all areas of life.

⁴ Newcomer and Hennekens, "Severe Mental Illness and Risk of Cardiovascular Disease," *JAMA*.2007; 298: 1794-1796

⁵ "In Diabetes, One More Burden for the Mentally Ill," *New York Times*, June 12, 2006.

⁶ Wiecha, Dwyer, & Dunn-Strohecker (1991) "Nutrition and health services needs among the homeless," *Public Health Reports* 106(4): 364-374.

⁷ Gelberg, Stein and Neumann (1995), "Determinants of Undernutrition Among the Homeless," in *Public Health Reports* 110(4): 448-454.

While the Center has a number of food distribution programs (including daily produce distribution and daily hot lunch), we are seeking funding for the *Food Pantry Project* because there has been steadily increasing demand, and because this program most efficiently feeds large numbers of people. Unlike our Lunch Program, which is accessible only to people who are able to come to the Survival Center at noon, the *Food Pantry Project* allows a single household member to retrieve a comprehensive assortment of groceries for an entire family in a single visit. It is this program that ensures that elderly parents, children attending school, and low-wage workers with inflexible schedules can all get the food and nutrition they need.

Define the process that will be used to maintain involvement of the project beneficiaries in the implementation of the project.

Central to the Amherst Survival Center's mission is to provide food, health care, clothing and community through volunteer efforts. The success of the *Food Pantry Project*, like that of all our other programs, is largely due to the outpouring of volunteer involvement by non-consumers and consumers alike. Our sustained history of volunteer efforts serves both to lower costs significantly and to engage the whole community in every aspect of the project.

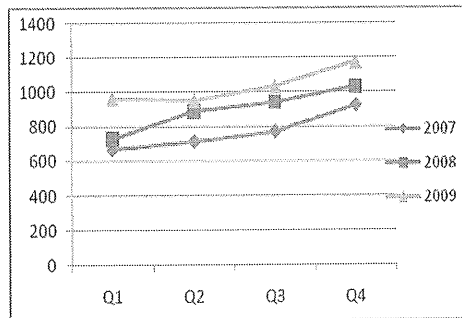
D. Project Feasibility

The project impact will be evaluated upon the extent to which the response meets the following criteria:

1. *What evidence is there that people will participate in this project?*

The greatest expression of community need and best predictor of continued participation in the program can be found in the increasing demand for the *Food Pantry Project* at the Survival Center. The program has experienced 40% growth in the number of people requesting assistance in the last three years, as illustrated by the graph below.

Number of households served by the Food Pantry 2007-2009



Moreover, the *Food Pantry Project* has become a major thread in Amherst's safety net, serving families and individuals who utilize the services of a number of agencies. We also cooperate directly with other local agencies such as Jessie's House, The Literacy Project, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County to help struggling families thrive. Amherst has a system of providing vouchers for child care that go to many of the same people that Survival Center programs serve. Family Outreach social workers frequently accompany parents to our Food Pantry for extra groceries. This support through informal collaboration is ongoing.

2. *Identify the roles and responsibilities of all personnel involved in the project as well as internal controls.*

- **Executive Director:** Responsible for fundraising and community outreach
- **Program Director:** Responsible for overseeing agency logistics and managing volunteers for the program
- **Pantry Coordinator:** Responsible for overseeing food pantry operations, procuring food at the Food Bank of Western MA, coordinating food drives and reporting on *Food Pantry Project* participation for funders

Survival Center staff work together on this project with more than 20 volunteers, many of whom are also service consumers. The volunteers undertake core tasks such as serving clients, loading food, stocking shelves and keeping the Food Pantry clean and orderly.

3. *Citing past accomplishments, document that the agency has the necessary past expertise to conduct the activity and has successfully completed past activities in a timely manner.*

The Amherst Survival Center has a thirty-five year history of providing for families' basic needs in this community. During this time, the *Food Pantry Project* has expanded

from a shelf with a few random cans to a model operation serving 1,000 households each year. Now, more than 3,000 people use the Center for food assistance, as well as clothing and health care. The Food Bank of Western MA recently recognized the strength of this program by inviting our Executive Director to be part of a panel on “Non-Profit Best Practices” at the annual *Hunger Summit* in Springfield.

A second kind of evidence of the Center’s ability to conduct successful projects in a timely manner is our sustained success in fundraising from competitive sources both locally and across the state. In the last three years the Survival Center has received multiple grants from a variety of funders including the United Way of both Hampshire and Franklin Counties, the Community Foundation of Western MA and The Women’s Fund of Western MA, among others.

Perhaps the greatest measure of our success comes from the testimony of participants in our programs:

The ASC provided me with valuable assistance when I was a young family man. The monthly food allotment made the difference between having enough to eat and going hungry. Later on I was able to come and help with the Fresh Food Distribution Program. The assistance I’ve received and the opportunity to volunteer have been rewarding to me in many ways.

4. Please submit a program budget that includes all sources of revenue and all expenses.

See attached.

5. If applicable, describe and document the availability and source of matching or other funds needed to complete the project.

As with all programs at the Amherst Survival Center, project financing involves support from diverse sources. The table below, taken from our Program Budget, shows that we will seek matching funds from the United Way of Hampshire County, the federal Emergency Food and Shelter Program and individual donors to support the *Food Pantry Project*.

Program Income	Amherst	Non-Amherst	TOTAL
Community Development Block Grant	\$ 20,482	\$ -	\$ 20,482
United Way of Hampshire County	\$ -	\$ 8,500	\$ 8,500
Emergency Food & Shelter Program: Hampshire County	\$ 2,205	\$ 1,295	\$ 3,500
Emergency Food & Shelter Program: Franklin County		\$ 1,200	\$ 1,200
Contributions	\$ 2,205	\$ 3,624	\$ 5,829
Total Program Income	\$ 24,892	\$ 14,619	\$ 39,511

All of our programs are sustained in addition by community involvement through volunteering and donations of food coupled with price-reduced food supplies from the Food Bank of Western MA. These in-kind and matching resources add a value of \$54,640 to the *Food Pantry Project*.

E. Impact

The most obvious and direct impact of this program is that fewer people will go to bed hungry in Amherst. Numerous studies confirm that “persons who had access to and used a wide variety of free food sources such as soup kitchens [and] pantries that give free groceries...”⁸ were significantly better nourished than those without those resources. The variety of healthful choices we provide prevents serious malnutrition.

Harder to measure, but equally important, is the impact that good nutrition has on families’ and individuals’ ability to thrive. A recent study by Katherine Alaimo, a community health scholar at the University of Michigan, for example, demonstrates that “food deprivation...puts children at risk for multiple developmental problems” including major depression and inability to get on with school peers as well as cognitive deficits that lead to difficulty with school work. Our Emergency Food services have the potential to have a major direct impact on food deprivation and consequent indirect impact on the full range of quality of life issues for families, including children’s development and success in school.

F. Evaluation

While the Survival Center has made the difference for thousands of people over the last thirty years, our statistics show that low-income Amherst residents are still underserved. In the last 12 months, 257 Amherst households with children utilized the *Food Pantry Project* at least once. According to the 2000 US census, however, there are at least 329 families in Amherst living at or below the poverty level (which in 2008, for a family of four, is \$18,310), and approximately twice that number who meet the somewhat higher USDA poverty guidelines (\$33,874).

It is harder to evaluate the scale of poverty in households without children, due to the large presence of University undergraduates, some of whom are considered to be living in poverty but whose circumstances differ significantly from many of our clients. Nevertheless, the gap between the number of individuals served by the *Food Pantry Project* in Amherst (1,691), and the number of individuals living in poverty reported in Census 2000 (4,530) suggests that we have some work to do in reaching out to

⁸ Gelberg, Stein and Neumann (1995), “Determinants of Undernutrition Among the Homeless,” in *Public Health Reports* 110(4): 448-454.

struggling individuals and couples as well.

With these numbers in mind, the goal of the *Food Pantry Project* in 2011 is to increase the number of low-income Amherst families and individuals who utilize this service by 10%.

Our strategic plan lays out basic methods and benchmarks for assessing progress toward this and other programmatic goals. Qualitative measures look at numbers of consumers using the program, waiting time for services, and the consistency of volunteer coverage for key activities. We also assess the demographics of consumers quarterly to make sure that services are being utilized by all those in the community who may need them. In addition, it is the policy at the Survival Center to provide ongoing feedback opportunities (such as quarterly open meetings and an anonymous suggestion box). The information we gather allows us to adjust our services to best meet community needs.

G. Agency Information

The Amherst Survival Center is a regional resource founded in 1975 that provides food, health care, clothing and community through volunteer efforts to over 3,000 people each year, 63% of whom live in Amherst. The only organization of its kind in the area, we offer an Emergency Food Pantry, Soup Kitchen, Free (Thrift) Store, drop-in Free Health Clinic, volunteer opportunities and an extensive referral system, all in a single location that serves as an easy one-stop operation for families and individuals in need in the Amherst area. As detailed above in Section D(3), the Survival Center has been commended as a model provider by local agencies and foundations.

Our approach begins with a broad definition of basic needs, which includes not only food and clothing, but also health care, access to entitlements such as health insurance and food stamps, and a supportive community, created in large part by providing consumers with opportunities both to receive services and to gain skills through volunteering themselves.

The Amherst Survival Center is the only agency in the area that provides comprehensive basic needs services in a single location. Studies have shown that service integration of this sort “produced significant dividends in the form of reduced duplication and waste, strengthened local communities, and improved client outcomes.”⁹

⁹ Hassett and Austin (1997), “Service Integration: Something old and something new,” in *Administration and Social Work*.

CERTIFICATE OF TAX COMPLIANCE

Pursuant to Massachusetts General Law chapter 62C, sec 49A, I hereby certify under penalties of perjury that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, I am in compliance with all laws of the Commonwealth relating to taxes, reporting of employees and contractors, and withholding and remitting child support.

04-2698462

Social Security or Federal I.D. number

ce c. Jull
Signature: Individual or Corporate Officer

10/22/2010

Date

PLEASE PRINT

Corporate Name: Survival Centers, Inc. (Amherst Survival Center)

Address: 1200 North Pleasant Street, P.O. Box 9629

City, State, Zip Code: North Amherst, MA 01059-9629

CERTIFICATE OF NON-COLLUSION

The undersigned certifies under penalties of perjury that this Proposal or proposal has been made and submitted in good faith and without collusion or fraud with any other person, business, partnership, corporation, union committee, club or other organization, entity or group of individuals.

Date: 10/22/2010

Co. C. Joll

Signature of individual submitting Proposal or proposal

Name of Business: Survival Centers, Inc. (Amherst Survival Center)

Address of Business: 1200 North Pleasant Street, P.O. Box 9629
North Amherst, MA 01059-9629